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by Reetta Bennett

EPIC AND LYRIC. ALLEGRO

I

Sun, the early riser, kicked off his blanket of rosy fleece, surveyed his glowing countenance reflected in the mercurial waters of a small cold river, smiled benevolently upon the fogless, smogless late June landscape, stopped, stretched, sniffed the country air, and smiled again.

Sun, the cloud-chaser, shadow-scatterer, valiant foe of Night, intrepid hunter of Darkness, having sent the stars scurrying from the sky like mice in a burning hayloft and having sent a shaft of light piercing through farmer McDevitt's silo, ascended to view his rural ravages with pleasure.

Sun, lord of the seasons and king of the days, sat enthroned in a cerulian circle. The pine trees lifted their black-burred branches in homage; the barn swallows swooped low, bowing beneath him; a mixed and motley chorus of hens, roosters, chicks, ducks, cows, calves, billy-goats and puppy-dogs raised their voices in polyphonic salute. The bees in the clover hummed a hymn to him. Beaming, he blessed them.

Sun, the observed, the observer, and the agent of observation, watchman and guide, teacher and revealer, scrutinized the activities of the honest earth creatures. He considered the daisies of the cornfield: simple-hearted, they had no secret from him or from themselves. Beaming, he directed benedictions upon their dusty yolks of heads.

Sun, the intruder, hater of the unknown and the irrational, disturber of dreams and destroyer of germs, probed the shadowy places. He glared disapprovingly at the side of a white wooden house and set his sites upon a particular window, wide-opened and white-curtained. Beyond the window, on a pillow on a bed, was a head. The head was a girl's and the girl slept defiantly. A cloud passed across his face, a frown as he prepared to glare again.

Thick black lashes shielding sealed eyelids. Black hair, heavy-stranded, smooth and dark as the Styx. Black, reflecting the hot morning light, cold star blue and dusk amethyst. A moonchild, she and all her kind—daughters of the moon-measuring time, not as wise men measure it—in ever forward marching rhythm, but ebbing and

flowing in sea rhythm. (In this benighted area, some still planted by the moon. So had the unsmiling squaws who had once dwelt upon the land poked maize grains in the soil beneath the soil where farmers now drove their furrows.)

Red: the sun seared the linings of her eyelids—pressing hard—breaking their barrier and flooding through her eyes a river of red, pouring it molten into the caverns of her sleep.

Red: blood and oil paint smeared on burning canvas.

Red: violent and unpleasant.

Red: her hand clutched the pillow and made it a shield for her face.

Dark-brown: and cool like river water below a sheet of ice.

It is difficult to breathe with a pillow on one's nose. The attempt awakened her, blinking and cursing and wondering where she was: "Hotter than Hades—maybe it is. No, spool bed, sprigged wall paper, chintz quilt—Hades, indeed! The farm, damn it; Aunt Martha, damn it all to Hell. Crawl under. Burrow to foot of bed. No use. Late. Sunday morning; I'd forgotten. Damn. Pleasant View Presbyterian Church. 'Deliver me, O Lord.' Celestial choir of two fat and resonant gentlemen, three thin and nasal gentlemen, seven near-sighted ladies—and a partridge in a pear tree. Wish I were a Mohammedan. Never bother to try salvaging souls of women. Simply don't exist! Heavenly bodies Wake! for the sun . . . and thou, and thou, beneath the bough, chewing a grass blade like a cow, with a jug unplugged and a rug well-snugged and thou—and thou—Lord! I must be losing my mind! Extemporaneous doggerel. The Persian influence. Matisse feels it too. Ah, how we artists must suffer! Aunt Martha's in the kitchen; buckwheat cakes, sniff, and sausage, sniff-sniff. How inconsiderate — burping during responsive reading almost inevitable. And singing too, she is. What on earth? 'Shall we Gather at the River?' Yes, Auntie, I daresay we shall. Lethe or Acheron? Plegethon for me. All aboard! Spit out your fare for St. Charon and pay no attention to St. Ceberus: his bark is nine times worse than his bite. What

shall I wear? Petticoats and French heels? Or-gandy and ruffles? Burgundy and truffles.

Wake! for the sun—and thou—how does that melody go? With fiddle or with flute? Schehere-zade—morning after her first—courage, my pet, only a thousand more to go. What shall I wear? My saffron silk pantaloons with topazes in my ears and through my hair and on my arms and around my ankles? Or the azure sari with the sapphire nose ring? My lord has turned his back upon me and is facing the East now. On his hands and knees—but he will rise up and return ere the sun at his heels had faded, before the lamps are lit. My pillow is cool and sweet—or so shall you find it. What would your Aunt Martha say! By the beard of the billy-goat Gruff, niece we're going to be late for church! She'll be up here in a minute. Remarkable restraint she hasn't been up here before now—must be nearly ten. Play possum. Give her the pleasure of seeing me crawl out into light and blink. Angel Gabriel complex; give her a bugle for her birthday. Rooster blood in her veins. Where was I? Facing Mecca. No use. Blast those birds out there busting their guts trying to drown each other out! Insensitive lot of crows! Hush, here she comes. Prepare for the official waking up, wake-upping, waking-upping. Expression of angelic peace and contentment—that's fine. Here she comes. Hush.

II

Light, strained through a half-inch thickness of stained glass, lost its summer noon white-hotness and became rose-gold warmth, the sort of radiance that might encircle the head of a young female saint. No saints in sight, it settled upon old oak pews, upon a new plum plush aisle runner, upon flesh and upon fabric, upon the choir director's three diamond rings, upon the silver cross between stacked silver collection plates, upon the yellow roses by the organ and upon the pale green roses around Mrs. Marsh Thompson's brown hat.

A baby, staring with blue-eyed vacancy over his mother's shoulder at the people in a row behind his people in a row, saw sunbeams bouncing on the brim of a straw bonnet. He liked the sunbeams because they moved and the bonnet because it was bumpy and shiny. His fat itching fingers rolled into lumps at the prospect. If only the face under the hat had eyes that rolled or a nose that crinkled, he would have liked the face. But the face didn't move at all—it was just there. Only moving faces saw Baby, so it seemed to Baby.

The minister's voice came by on waves of assurance that rolled by the bumpy, shiny bonnet.

"Well, baby, you don't have much hair, do you? Just that little wisp of tow on top. Why doesn't your mother wipe your chin before you slobber all over her? If you were mine—Heaven

forbid—I'd keep you home in a bucket. I'd like to go swimming after dinner, no—right now. Get up and walk out and go to the river. Clear water and clean sand on the bottom. Martha would have a fit, 'snakes, current, chills, cramps, etc.' Jolly rot! She's really afraid I'll be abducted—by a merman, maybe. Down, down, down, where the water's still. I'd probably have to sprout fins and a tail to pacify his family—No escaping some sort of conformity. 'Conformity to Non-conformity,' they say at school. Great reverence for paradoxes there. Here they use other words: 'good,' 'evil,' 'right,' 'wrong.' The elephant stands patiently while the blind men grope. 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God,' said the small red-eye, said the big gray ear, said the—what's that man up there saying now? Sermons here all cut from same pattern: introduction—one—two—three—conclusion. Bless you and keep you for seven more days. Amen. Magic formula, invariable, simple. We had to outline everything in high school—outline the outlines. Bones with no meat on them. Wonder what sort of girl the skeleton in the biology lab was? 'Nice hands,' the professor said, 'but she's a little hippy.' Thirteen-inch pelvis, poor girl! Educated little Christian like me? I doubt it. More likely hauled out of a sewer with a pole or died in a reformatory or in an asylum. Unclaimed, unidentified. Pickled, peeled. How fragile, how cheap life is! Not one of us, here, no not even you, baby—. No, stop. Why? What use torturing myself? Don't think. Don't ever think. It's torture to think. Try to listen. Try to listen. Try—out there on the highway, cars are going by. Words go by in here. It all goes by. Only I, I am quite still. The sermon should be over soon. Shall I say to the preacher how excellent I found his sermon? No, I am not as bad as all that. No—handshaking and hugging outside. Brace yourself. The how-are-you-what-a-young-lady-you've-become-and-not-married-yets. Not dead yet, either, thank you. Not yet. All they think about. 'Solomon Grundy, born on Monday,' check the congregation for eligible bachelors. Red ears and starched collar on second row. Respectable young peasant, why not? A pirate would be better. I'm as free as I'll ever be. I will go swimming after dinner. Hang Aunt Marty. I'll tell her I'm going to sketch wild flowers in the woods. Won't eat much. Too hot for biscuits and gray anyhow. 'But Aunt Martha, I'll get fat if I eat all the lovely stuff you poke at me.' They'll all say, 'Nice hands, but a little hippy, don't you think?' My merman won't care—fins and a nice scaly silver tail. You'd like that, wouldn't you baby?"

III

It's going to be dark soon, dear little brother. What's happened to you? Why don't you come?

(Continued on Page 14)

I'll Wear A Big Coat

Almost noon
Almost April
When I looked out my window and . . .
Strange spring
Coming so soon
Yesterday . . .
Too warm October.
"When I come here again it will be cold;
I'll wear a big coat."

Big coat
Filling space
When it spreads out its folds and . . .
Strange soul
There is no room
Wearing a . . .
Too-warm coat.
"When I wear a big coat there will be no room;
I'll leave my soul at home."

What purpose
What lie
When April strews her senseless flowers and . . .
Strange spring
Coming so soon
Stirring a . . .
Too-bruised soul.
"When I try I can not believe in little flowers;
I'll sew a button on my coat."

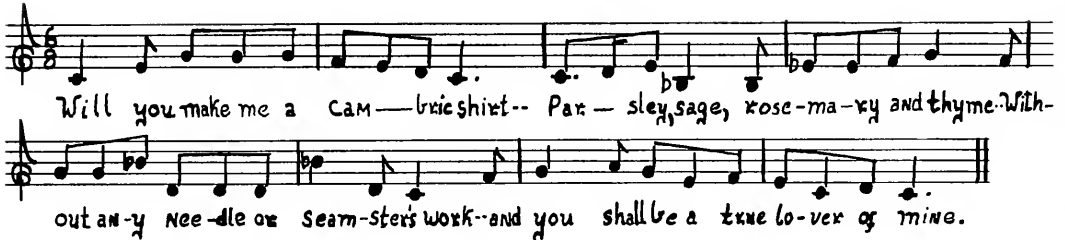
Shirley Dixon



Margaret McCrery

Religues

by Joan Moser



*Will you make me a cambric shirt—Parsley, sage,
rosemary and thyme—
Without any needle or seamster's work—And you
shall be a true lover of mine.*

*Will you wash it in yonder's well—Parsley, sage,
rosemary and thyme—
Where there is no water and rain never fell—And
you shall be a true lover of mine.*

*Will you dry it on yonder's thorn—Parsley, sage,
rosemary and thyme—
That's never bloomed blossoms since Adam was
born—And you shall be a true lover of mine.*

*Now you've asked me questions three—Parsley,
sage, rosemary and thyme—
If you can answer as many for me—Then you shall
be a true lover of mine.*

*Will you find me an acre of land—Parsley, sage,
rosemary and thyme—
Betwixt the salt water and the sea sand—And you
shall be a true lover of mine.*

*Will you plough it with a ram's horn—Parsley,
sage, rosemary and thyme—
And sow and plant it all down in corn—And you
shall be a true lover of mine.*

*Will you reap it with a sickle of leather—Parsley,
sage, rosemary and thyme—
And haul it home on a pea-fowl's feather—And you
shall be a true lover of mine.*

*When you've done and finished your work—Pars-
ley, sage, rosemary and thyme—
Then come and get your cambric shirt—And you
shall be a true lover of mine.*

This is a folksong. Literary scholars will describe it as "the only form of medieval vernacular poetry which has continually survived"; historians and sociologists would observe it as a manifestation of our cultural heritage; musicians might condescendingly conclude that it is a primitive expression of a musical art form; the great American public, if they noticed it at all, would remark that it is "quaint."

Being labeled a folksong, it is entitled to the honor of being searched out of its obscurity by one of the twentieth century's manifold group of specialists commonly referred to as folklorists. Having once been "discovered," the song will be promptly dictated, notated, classified and categorized. From thence it will be printed for mass consumption, providing that the folklorist is the enterprising kind; and if the song is particularly fortunate the words and the melody may both be included. If the folklorist is a methodical scholar, it will be very efficiently filed into the oblivion
(Continued on Page 13)

Dramatis Ascending

by Ann Covington

"You say there are significant things which are happening that I do not know about? Impossible! I take 18 hours, read the newspaper and sometimes go to the Victory. But, of course (in a far off voice), I haven't been off this campus in years . . . Well, perhaps, just perhaps mind you, you may be right. Exactly *what* things do you mean?"

"Believing that all the arts are related and that these arts are the saving factors on any campus or in any organization where there is human life, it becomes pertinent at all times to know the direction which these arts are taking, to realize what is being done on campuses other than your own. That is what I want to tell you about. Let me begin in this manner."

AETA made a five year survey of college and university productions from 1950 to 1954 and according to their results it was found that the Broadway play has been established as the basic ingredient in the production schedules in colleges. Also that while the production of standard plays has been relatively constant, musicals and children's productions have fluctuated widely over the survey period. From the standpoint of production the most popular plays of the five year period were *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Our Town*. This is a general picture of recent trends in drama, however, the most notable achievement in educational theatre has been the increased number of original productions. This takes into consideration only the major, full-length play presented before a paying audience large enough to insure tangible audience response. This achievement can be taken as a favorable sign that it is now being realized that the university must share with the community and professional theatre the responsibility for the development of the drama and the encouragement of its writers.

The college can very well be the workshop for professional drama. It should, in fact, be the place where experiments are made in drama with new methods of production, new forms in drama and new methods of acting. We must continue to create new ideas in drama. Drama has just as much responsibility to the new age and modern thought as any other art form. Drama serves as an enjoyable means for a person to develop self-understanding, to relate to the world in which he lives,

and to extend his experiences in living. As an art, drama rose out of the urge to ponder questions of human existence and destiny and it must continue to do this in the most contemporary way man can conceive. Greek drama, which was used to develop the whole personality and the idea of improvisation, served to keep alive the creative aspect of music and drama. But when creation gave way to imitation and technique the Greek Theatre died and with it the Greek nation.

One example of a university which has put this idea to work is Syracuse University. The drama department of Syracuse University is fundamentally a part of the cultural structure of the university. The extensive body of subject matter that theatre offers and the practice of theatrical arts and crafts are treated as cultural instruments in developing the student's over-all growth and development. The department tries to prepare the student at the same time for a career in the theatre and to contribute to the creation of a theatrical style expressive of our times. The dramas and the music dramas selected for presentation before a paying audience include recognized classics, modern masterpieces, recent Broadway scripts, original manuscripts and experimental productions requiring pioneering techniques either in playwriting, acting or staging.

And what are the experiments which are being done with drama in other universities? Just last year at Baylor University a very exciting experiment with Hamlet was made. The drama director, Paul Baker, began the experiment by cutting the character of Hamlet into three parts: (1) warlike man of action, (2) introspective philosopher with matricidal impulses, (3) jovial nobleman. These three were played by separate actors dressed alike. The fourth Hamlet was a composite of all three and spoke most of the lines. The others spoke only to emphasize an aspect of character. The play was given in a unique auditorium, designed by Baker, which is surrounded by three stages. The audience, sitting on swivel chairs in the middle, in order to be able to turn to see the action of all the stages, was centered in a whirlpool action and literally engulfed by the drama. The sound effects were created backstage by students

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A Tone Poem

by Tamara Oikowoka

In the spring time the birch trees look again like brides—younger brides. They are lonely though—like I—especially when they do not stand in clusters so that they can whisper to each other.

I like to sit here and look at them. Only I cannot hear their whispering. The ice blocks on the river keep bumping into each other. They make a thundering noise and push each other to the East.

The river is much broader than usual. (It is nearly overflowing.) It is dark and murky too. In the summer the water is clear and reflects the clouds and the birds. But now it reflects only light and me—dimly, if I stand close to the edge. And sometimes the storks fly so low that their white bodies and red legs are mirrored in the water as the light and I.

When the moon rises, he comes and we go boating. We do not go far; the boat leaks a little. I sit quietly and think of drowning. But the frogs interrupt me all the time. They laugh at me and I am mad at them.

I am on dry land again, and wriggle my toes joyfully.

It is early yet. My eyes are wide open and my ears pick up some sounds from the gypsy camp.

I go there and wonder if those of last year returned. They are others—other persons, yet the same people.

I like them because they are gypsies. They hold a festival every night and invite everybody—even me.

Their dark children feed me salty food. Then I ask for water. When I drink out of the heavy wooden cup, I feel a burning in my throat and tears on my cheeks. But I feel good after the burning sensation.

Sleep comes and sits on my eyelids. The soft music tones that escape the vibrating strings of the guitar lull me. It is so pleasant to listen to the plucks that sigh and weep.

And while I float between the real and unreal, an old woman begins to tell fortunes. Everybody moves to form a circle around her. My arms and legs support me weakly and I flop into a small space between two bodies that smell of hay and horses.

The old woman moves her dry and toothless mouth. But to me everything is as soundless as her mouth is toothless. I cannot hear. I am all eyes. She is so stone old; maybe a resurrected Egyptian mummy.

She can tell when a person will die. Is she going to die some day too? I do not think so. But I am going to die when I am sixty. It suits me. That is old indeed.

The night air hurts me. The roosters are crowing. Dampness is spreading all over the fields. I want to get away from its wet fingers. I run toward the house and the hearth.

The days are longer and warmer now. The lilacs and acacias are breathing out spring odors.

I sit on the wooden bench in front of the house and watch the swallows build their nests. They stick their little black mud houses against the white wall just above the windows.

Black and white—just like their swift over-turning bodies.

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JODIE

by Gloria Maready

Jodie sat on the third step from the top with her legs up against her narrow chest and her peaked chin in the little crevice between her knees. The sun shone on the top of her head making her warm and sweaty. She only sat there in the summer when she didn't have to go to school. Only then was the sun as hot as it was now.

Jodie could hear her mother upstairs in the apartment. She was sweeping the floor, swirling the dust out onto the landing. For an instant Jodie felt the life-flow and then the door slammed shut and she was alone again.

Suddenly, Jodie wished she had her book with her. She had forgotten to call it *Grimm's Fairy Tales* now and it was only the Book. She didn't know how the book appeared to other people—all worn and smudged and pale, insipid blue. She only knew that it was clear and shining and so very blue. There was a castle on the cover, a dragon, a king and a queen, a princess and last and most wonderful of all, a slender prince on a white horse. Jodie knew his face so well now, for she had looked and looked into it until she knew every line, every curve of it. And the stories—she had read them all and it seemed to her as if the Prince were telling her the stories. She discovered that it was better to look at the prince and to let her eyes blur until everything was gauzy blue. In the haziness she could see his eyes and his mouth smiling, softly. Then, while she could still see his face, Jodie always turned quickly to a story and began to read, to listen to his voice. Slowly Jodie had started to believe that if the Prince were telling her the stories in her book surely she could find him and he would tell her many, many more.

Only this morning she had read "Snow White" again and in the part where the Prince finally comes and breaks the magic spell and carries the Princess away, Jodie had cried and cried until she was afraid her mother would hear. Then, she had held her sobs and they had torn at her throat, scratching and biting.

Finally, she had turned to the cover and there he was, smiling at her through the mist of her tears. She had known then that he was near, alive, to be searched for and that all she had to do was to go out and look for him in the streets, in the multi-faced street.

Jodie stood up on the steps and looked down the street wondering if her mother would mind.

She knew she would. She would say to Jodie when she found out: "How many times do I have to tell you? Little nine-year-old girls aren't supposed to traipse all over the streets by themselves. Now, don't you let me catch you again—again—" Jodie decided not to tell her mother. Really, she just had to go out and look, just this one time, just to see if she could ever find . . . ever find . . . She looked over her shoulder and ran quickly down the remaining steps.

Jodie walked rapidly and she felt steamy and warm with excitement. She was walking so fast that her straight brown hair blew back from her freckled face, a thin brown-yellow body all quickness and warmth.

She reached the corner of the street and stood impatiently on one foot while the light changed to yellow, then green. Her twitchy little figure darted across the street and ran breathlessly until she reached the main part of the town at the next corner. She stood poised for a moment on the corner looking at the people crossing and walking and talking and looking and all things. She looked at them from a far, far place, yet with an immediacy that made her look into the face of all of them. Her lips fell apart slightly, and she felt giddy from the excess of people, the rich, beautiful abundance of the streams of people. She saw that the light was green, and she crossed the street feeling the lovely nearness of the crowd around her. She walked with her face turned up, looking at the people, scanning every face—looking—looking.

All in a rush she thought she saw him. She saw an instant of his face and then he turned the corner quickly while Jodie in her haste ran into a fat old lady who began to quarrel. Jodie helped her pick up her packages and then turned breathlessly to find him, and he was gone.

Jodie knew she might cry so she drifted with the crowd of moving people over to stand beside a brick wall. She pushed her balled hands hard into the firmness of the brick and quickly the shiny tears crept back and mingled with the shiny brown of her eyes. Jodie lifted her head again and looked into the passing faces.

While she stood there one shape came from the unity, disarranged the brilliant pattern, and looked down into her face. She looked into the watery, pale blue eyes of an old, old man. He grinned at her.

"Hello, little girlie. Whatcha doin'?"

She looked down from the eyes and stared at his little round belly covered by a dirty blue striped shirt and didn't answer. She knew it wasn't the Prince. His eyes weren't right. Yet he was speaking to her, asking her again—She answered: "Just walkin'." She could tell him if only she knew he would understand. She wouldn't yet. He was talking again.

"Howja like to have some lemonade and a cracker, little girlie?" His smile was quite nice this time and his gray, beard-stubbed face cracked with it. Still Jodie didn't answer. No one had ever, ever talked to her like this, especially when she was just walking down the street alone. Today, when she had been looking for the Prince and now some one out of all the people had asked her if she would like lemonade. If only he wasn't so dirty and his eyes were clear and didn't look as though they were going to cry even while he smiled, it would be different—yet—he was pretty close. He had been kind and wanted to know . . . now . . .

"How 'bout it, honey?"

She looked at him, a tiny smile flew across her plain little face, and she said, "O. K."

"Fine. Fine." He said it heartily as if he were so glad, so very glad to have someone. She was glad too, and she didn't think any more about the dirty shirt or the old eyes.

He took her hand and said, "Let's go down here. I got some good ole lemonade and stuff."

He held her hand firmly, and they stepped into the rushing, pressing current of people. He didn't say anything else. She felt like a little girl again, like when her mother used to carry her uptown to buy groceries and held her hand tightly. She liked it, the firmness of his hand and all, so safe. They came to the intersection, and he turned to the right without crossing the street. Jodie saw that they were going down an old street away from the brightness of the people, the brilliant pattern of the people and they were two, apart from clarity. She wondered where, but he didn't say anything. She felt a happy moment of thought: "Maybe he's taking me to the Prince . . . why not . . . he picked me out from all the others . . . maybe he knew . . . and now I'll see the Prince and ask him . . . ask him . . . all the things I ever wanted to know . . . ever . . ."

The old man turned sharply now, and she looked up and saw him glance over his shoulder briefly. Then, "We'll go down here, little girlie, and get some nice cold lemonade." He indicated five dark steps leading down to a basement where a door stood slightly open. She followed, and his grip on her hand tightened. She didn't think anymore about her questions she would ask because she heard the old man breathing hard. It annoyed

her because it sounded so nearly like a dog that was always outside her apartment house. She hated that dog. He had tried to bite her twice.

Jodie tried to take her hand away from the old man's because it was sweaty and uncomfortable. He held it tighter, tighter until it began to hurt. Then, they were at the door and inside. He closed it, and she saw he was smiling at her through the dimness of the room, and his eyes were crying inside. Suddenly, sharply, she was lonely. He moved towards her mumbling, "Nice girlie, nice girlie, nice, nice . . ." She stood still as he moved closer and closer, not able to move until she blurted in a loud, high voice, "Lemonade, you promised . . ." Then, he was there, at her, and she felt his moist hand on her arm. He stooped, and she felt his other hand on her leg moving up and up . . .

"No," suddenly she moved and cried and ran to the door, and he didn't try to hold her. She paused at the door one moment and saw him standing in the middle of the floor with his dirty old shirt sticking out and his eyes more watery than ever. He didn't come after her. She ran up the five steps out into the lightness of the gray street and ran fiercely down the street until she reached the moving people. When she was there, she turned back and couldn't see anything, anything at all except the dark emptiness of the street.

She stood and caught her breath. Smoothing down her crumpled dress, she decided not to cry. He had been so nice, but she knew it wasn't right, ever. She thought she would ask the Prince when she found him why the old man had eyes that cried inside of him, and why his clothes were dirty, and why the people were moving and the cars were moving, and why she was alone . . . why she was alone . . . All at once she felt sad. She knew she couldn't find the Prince never, ever. Besides her mother would be mad, so very mad with her. She thought she'd better go home. She wanted to cry, but couldn't understand . . . so she moved out into the street and started walking. This time she didn't look up into the faces. She looked down at the sidewalk and thought about the hotness of her leg and how mad her mother . . .

She knew that more than anything else in the world she wanted to be back again reading her book on the steps where the people didn't flow along in colored streams, where she wouldn't see the nice old man who had acted so funny. She picked up her feet sharply and began to walk faster, crossing the street when the light changed. She almost ran, ran until she reached the steps of her apartment house.

"Mom, Mom." Shortly, staccato, without breath.

Her mother's voice answered through the screen door. "Don't come in here Jodie. I'm waxing the
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Birthright

a book review

by Mary Taylor Batten

Book Review—BIRTHRIGHT—

By Lettie Hamlett Rogers

Simon and Schuster

New York—1957

"He's having to ask his questions very young. One is, *Why?* He's learning—God knows, too fast—about hate and unreason and death. And now it follows—he's got to ask with everything he has, What's life about? I don't know what you can do about it—it seems improbable and fantastic but all of it has turned around the race issue, if that's any hint—but I do know that if you don't do something, he's kaput—finished, and he won't kill himself, he'll live his death likely for a very long time. He's built strong."

... Because we live here we may hope to understand this fragment of conversation between an elementary school teacher and a minister concerning the latter's fifth grade son . . .

Martha Lyerly, the twenty-five-year-old protagonist of Mrs. Rogers' novel, makes the theme of BIRTHRIGHT explicit in this key paragraph from the book about a small southern town, Peegram, and southern guilt and pride and revenge and southern children.

For those who do not accept the mockery of the regional birthright there is a conflict between that natural right to choose to live and the pressure to assume the ancestral mask of the society into which one is born. Martha Lyerly, the daughter of an Austrian laborer, is a teacher from a university. Her battle is against dishonesty based on the fear that a tradition, which has twisted about its people as ivy around cracked columns, will be destroyed. Rogers' symbol for the South in the first paragraph of the book is descriptive enough—the newspaper, "shape of an unstable pyramid of a tent in a state of collapse."

For the reader, Mrs. Rogers has chosen to enter that particular tent of Peegram where Martha Lyerly is trying to be an educator. The conflict within the southerner who does not refuse to listen is adroitly handled in the characterization of Seth Erwin. Seth is the son of the family for whom the county was named; he is also the half-brother of Jim Erwin, mulatto, whom the townspeople do

not talk about in public. Seth is a rather contrived individual, and I question the rightness of making him a preacher; though the rightness, in this case, lies in writing about a character who will be listened to. I can admire the restraint in the characterization—the unobtrusive revolts against Peegram: Seth names his son William Morrison, thus breaking the family tradition of Seth the son of Zebulon the son of Seth in Biblical monotony. And Seth can hate—himself for loving Martha, the alien, the radical; can hate his father for siring Jim Erwin and can hate the situation which has caused the breach between himself and his son.

Ray Hibbard, another fifth grader and friend of William Morrison, like the Biblical sparrow, induces that bit of insight necessary for change in Seth Erwin; the child's death also brings a group of children to an understanding of heroism stemming from honesty and the courage to believe and to die believing.

Seth has watched Ray's father and other older rebels of the town kill themselves in refusal to submit to the order of Carrie Hibbard and others like her who control Peegram from the stockholder's table. And Seth, bred in Peegram, is ready to fight slowly and cautiously—cautiously because he can do no other in Peegram and be effective.

Ironically, birthright is that stifled right, now become a blatant mockery among white citizens' councils. The hope for a solution to the South's destructive problem lies in those untaught teachers among youth, like William Morrison and Ray Hibbard, who refuse to prostitute themselves.

For the most part Mrs. Rogers' writing is clear and forceful and conveys the author's sensitivity to the conflicts among the personalities involved in blood relationships and psychological relationships of the South. Often, however, the writing becomes muddled in an attempt to combine third person narrative with first person introspection and this combination with a stream of consciousness method. But this is no point for bickering. The statements in BIRTHRIGHT are unmistakable. It is an important book.

Tall Houses in Winter

a book review

by Patricia Carden

TALL HOUSES IN WINTER

By Doris Betts, Putnam, 383 pp.

With the publication of *Tall Houses in Winter*, Doris Betts, a former *Coraddi* staff member, makes her debut as a novelist. Those of us who are familiar with her short stories (collected in the volume, *The Gentle Insurrection*) recognize her as a craftsman. The simplicity and effectiveness of her first novel confirm this opinion.

Doris Betts chooses to write about the South. She does so with a devotion and penetration which will bring a pang of anguish to others who also love and criticize the South. Her Stoneville will be dishearteningly familiar to many readers, but accurate as her drawing of Stoneville is, this is not the point at which Miss Betts concentrates her attention. Ryan Godwin, the principal character of the novel, is far more important to Miss Betts than any sociological implications about the South.

In Ryan Godwin's attitude toward Stoneville, toward the boy Fen, toward his disease, one finds what we will label (and what Miss Betts probably would *not* label) the Southern attitude. This attitude may be distinguished from the Tennessee Williams attitude and the Margaret Mitchell attitude. Ryan Godwin has a fear of conflict, a predisposition to avoid responsibility, an unwillingness to come to grips with that other hard, petty South which he emotionally and intellectually opposes, qualities which seem to be apparent in many intelligent Southerners.

The forces of reaction and materialism are represented in the novel principally by the other two Godwins, Asa and Avery. Ryan, Fen, Jessica, and Lady Malveena are sympathetic characters, a ratio of at least two to one, which should certainly indicate where the author's interests lie. The story is told from Ryan's point of view which is in line with the purpose of the novel: to show how Ryan, unsettled, never quite disenchanted, comes home in a vague search for answers, and finds something significant. The answer is in a personal relationship. Miss Betts seems to say, It costs a lot emotionally to become involved with other people, but in the end it pays off.

The reader of Miss Betts' work invariably is filled with respect for her masterful sentence-to-sentence writing. She has a special ability for choosing unobtrusive but effective details, for building a quiet, super-charged sentence, for creating intensity through simplicity.

Miss Betts still seems to us to be a better short story writer than novelist. She has achieved a real mastery of the short story form which she has not yet attained in the novel. The effects which leave the reader gasping in her stories are considerably thinned by the sheer length of a novel. We are not asking for richness in Miss Betts' writing. That is not her method. It would be out of place. It seems probable that the necessary tightening up is a problem which she has considered and with which she will cope in future works in her own way.

Incidentally, the Woman's College reader will be charmed to recognize familiar details in the description of Wellman College where it always rains on assembly days.



by Reetta Bennett

Religues

(Continued from Page 6)

of an archive—there are only two types of folklorists.

The folksong need not necessarily remain passive, however. If fortunate enough to possess either a rollicking tune with a good down-beat or a set of rather racy or amusing lyrics, it is a sure bet for a hit parade rating on a juke-box, sooner or later. That is, if the latest hit warbler and his aggressive agents discover that classifying him as a folk-singer will increase his appeal to the public. The word "folk" has persuasive power within today's climate of mediocrity which is at present comforting the citizens of the proletariat state which they have established for themselves.

Of course, there is another type of folksinger. This is the type who is serious about his art. He never sings anything but folksongs and he engages Carnegie Hall, if he has money; and his agent signs him up for college lectures and Cafe Society, if he needs money. This type specializes in accumulating a variety of odd instruments, supposedly variants of types played by the fabled mountaineer; and with these he wields a rather simple, unaffected and altogether bleak accompaniment. This variety of folksinger usually goes a step further than the adopted and adopting hit-parader, as he is often inclined to "arrange" and edit the words and music to such an extent that even the folk from which he presumably extracted the original version would no longer recognize it. This division is frequented by broken-down opera singers, ex-hillbillies, and the prim products of charm schools who haven't yet married and settled down to managing or frequenting antique shops and are, therefore, looking for a hobby.

If this, then, defines a folksong and its significance to general American culture today, it would doubtless be of benefit to both the song and to society if, after this brief, inevitable fad, it fizzles back into the illiterate environs from which it was extracted. The contradiction to this is in the song itself—and the fact that those to whom the song originally belonged continue to retain and to express the real significance of the poignant little melody with rhyming verses and stanzas mirroring strong implications of the supernatural in archaic riddles.

Here follows the common deduction: that the obviously privileged to whom I refer consists of only that backward segment of American citizenry who sit on their porches strumming their guitars and spitting tobacco juice on the rumps of their hound dogs.

The actual importance of the song is not in the entertainment derived from it by these people, although it may be a vital expression of their lives; the meaning is being found in the compelling force which it exercises on the artistic expression of the nation. Blind reverence for tradition is sterile; only when the forms of the past are fused within the creative experiences of the artist do they live.

This is a folk song. It belongs to the mountaineer; it belongs to the artist; it belongs to anyone who will experience it.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The words and the melody of this particular version of "The Cambric Shirt" were collected by Miss Moser and have never been previously published.)

Dramatis Ascending

(Continued from Page 7)

who added to the play's dramatic effect by playing the organ, banging drums, and cymbals. Anticipating his tour as an actor with Baker's production of *Hamlet* and *Henry VI*, Charles Laugh-ton said, "This is the only thing completely new in American theatre. We who love classic theatre have been like poached eggs with no toast to sit on. Now we have a piece of toast."

At the University of Wisconsin the Wisconsin Players presented a modernized version of Julius Caesar, using the same three stage idea. The play was presented in semi-modern dress and in a stark, symbolic setting. Shakespeare was modified even to the point of replacing swords by guns. To provide closer audience contact a few characters were planted among audience members; some also were stationed in lighting troughs overhanging the stage.

This is a sample of the experiments being made in the universities with drama. We are now compelled to ask: Were they good? Were they successful? Did they contribute to future time? Were they worthwhile? These questions can only be answered in this manner: It does not matter what we create as long as we do create from an honest need to search. Without this freedom there would never have been an O'Neill or a Chekhov. When we, as humans, no longer need to search, we will no longer need to create; there will be no more experimentation and then perhaps our fate will be like that of the Greek nation. That is all I wanted to tell you.

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JODIE

(Continued from Page 10)

floor, and you'll mess it up. Go back downstairs."

"But . . . oh, O. K. Mom, hand me that book on the coffee table, will ya?"

"All right." Her mother handed it to her from out behind the thick screen. "Now, don't you go any farther than the steps."

"Yes, m'am."

She took the book and ran from the door back down the steps and sat on the third one up. She opened the book and began to read. Her eyes blurred and she saw the beautiful Prince again . . . and all at once she began to cry as though she would never stop . . . ever . . . ever . . .

Epic and Lyric. Allegro

(Continued from Page 4)

She sat hugging her knees to her chin and scanned the pale empty road until it twisted out of sight. She was aware of nothing except the night that was coming, and the road that was the riddle that came and went and never moved. The colors of sunset, the black tree shapes against those colors—even these she would not remember. She remembered statistics and warnings: "Don't pass him yet; you can't see over the hill." "Pete is a good driver but I'm sure he takes chances when he's alone." "More on the highways than on the battlefields." "He's the only brother I have."

"Before supper," he had said. "Long before supper." Supper was always early at Aunt Martha's. Perhaps it wasn't really worth it to drive out so far in the country for supper; but his summer job was in the nearest large town; and he liked his sister; and he liked the farm; and he apparently liked Aunt Martha—at least he was loyal and acted as if he did. He'd never really say, though, if she got on his nerves. "Hope he can drive me home next Saturday. Otherwise, the puddle to puddle express. I always feel like a bean rolling along in a hot tin can with twenty-seven other beans. Another week here and I will be ready to hitchhike. Anywhere. Borrow a mule from the McDevitt's, that's what. Sancho Panza rides again. Moonlight and Muleback. Real exotic like."

The crickets began; but their sounds were as wasted upon her as the gold and mauve of the sunset had been. She listened for one sound.

"There's something coming." She watched a small pick-up truck rattle past.

She felt chilly. Her arms and shoulders were numb. The porch steps she sat on were hard. Her foot was asleep. She turned slightly and pressed her forehead against her knee caps. There were rambling roses and honeysuckle growing around the porch. The air she breathed was full of them but she was not reminded.

"Inconsiderate, that's what it is. He likes to keep people waiting. Likes to make a grand entrance at the last possible moment. *Deus ex Machina*. I'll fix him—ask him why he bothered to come. No, hurt his feelings another day, some other time. Just come and I'll be so nice you won't recognize me. Hypocrite in reverse: I want to be, but I can't. Hope Martha doesn't come out on the porch to talk. There's no honey on my tongue now, not even for her."

She and Pete had first visited here as children, when their mother's parents had been alive and had lived here. The present, it seemed to her, suffered much by comparison. Shadows upon the land. Darker and darker and everything into darkness, into bonds of shadow. She waited in the shadows. "He must come soon."

"To wait for that which never comes. What is it? What never comes? So much." She pitied herself—to tears almost. She pitied herself at length and so deeply that the sound of the motor did not reach her until the instant it was stopped. Even then she did not hear the tiny animal vibrations, nor even smell the tangled flowers, but she felt the darkness fragrant and gentle about her as she ran to the road. Beneath the shadows the earth was still warm with the afternoon sun.

Tone Poem

(Continued from Page 8)

In the evening when the swallows quiet down, I still sit on the bench. The morning-glories are sleeping their folded sleep. In the morning they are blue as the sky, and in the center a little white—blue sky and feathery, sheep-like clouds.

Because it is evening, the frogs begin their ancient chorus again. But they do not bother me this time. My ears are waiting for the cuckoo.

When I finally hear his call, I ask him how many years I will live. Then I count to sixty-five.

The cuckoo call announces rain. From far away I hear bumping, rolling sounds. I like thunder storms. Only the neighbors say that they hear cannons and that it is war. I recall the cannons in the park. I know what they look like. But war? I do not know what that is—WAR.

A Letter to the Student Artist

Dear Artist,

It is important that we understand each other at once. The *Coraddi* has been put in the position of defending and upholding you on this campus. We are responsible for your paintings and your manner of dress, your short stories and your idiosyncrasies. It is a privilege to defend you. We accept this responsibility. If your work is good enough, we will not only publish it, but insist on your right to walk on the grass.

But never forget, dear artist, that in allowing us to be your scapegoat, you have placed yourself in our debt. We at any rate are too shrewd to let you forget it. We demand payment in quality and quantity and our currency is art.

But you fail us. Either you never deposit your masterpieces under our dorm doors, or in our mailboxes, or in the *Coraddi* office, or the work that you bring is careless, careless. Are you a self-respecting artist or are you a person? The person can occasionally make excuses for stumbling; the artist never. Do you realize that you have committed yourself to the most exacting profession, one that demands and demands? Or have you committed yourself to anything? Writing and painting are crafts and arts. They demand skill and imagination. If you are a self-respecting artist, you will want to understand the tools of your trade. Only through using them can you express yourself.

But ah, you say. I have an excuse. And you do. We admit it. That word "student" in your appellation is your alibi. But you have to admit that we have taken your excuse into account. We have published your works, faults and all, because of their warmth or because of their breadth of understanding or because of their lyricism. We have rejoiced at your newfound intensity even when your line quality missed being what it should be.

We agree with you that the important thing is expression, but we cannot separate what you have to say from the way you say it. That is the nature of art. Otherwise you are reporting or editorializing, not creating. You, as an artist, realize how important it is for you to have freedom to do things the way you want to do them. That's something we're willing to fight for for you—a little breathing space in which to paint and write. We want this for you so that you can interpret and imagine for us, so that you can make our lives ring in round tones. But we won't lie to you that mean, purple lie which is lied when we print your work without merit, not even to encourage you to produce that gem that we know you are capable of producing. It won't be worth it to you. It won't even encourage you.

If you think that you are ready to publish and you are not, then it is time you knew the truth. If you do not know that your habits of working are shabby and ineffective, you will go on cheating your readers and viewers and yourself. We hope that you will not always remain a student artist working at a student artist's level of competency. We hope that you will become independent, experimental, sure . . . a master.

Sincerely,

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